

REQUIREMENTS FOR DOCUMENTED QUALITY CONTROL PROGRAMS-

USDA COMMODITY DICED CHICKEN

GENERAL

Processors who wish to participate in the USDA Commodity Diced Chicken purchase program must apply in writing to the Contracting Officer, Commodity Procurement Branch. The written application must include an outline of formulation and production processes they plan to use in producing commodity diced chicken.

Additionally, processors shall develop a documented quality control (QC) program that specifically addresses the removal of bone and bone-like material from the raw materials used in production of the commodity. The QC programs, as described below, are minimum requirements developed in accordance with the Diced Chicken Specification and the Poultry Graders Handbook. The documented program is to be submitted to the Contracting Officer for review and approval. Approval for participation in the Commodity Diced Chicken Purchase Program will be granted upon successful development of the QC guidelines and final review of the QC policies and procedures established by the processor. Subsequent revisions to the QC program must be submitted through the Federal State Supervisor and approved by the Contracting Officer prior to implementation of the revised process.

After review and acceptance by the processor, all materials (carcasses, parts, and meat) will be examined for final acceptance in accordance with the Diced Chicken Specification by the USDA Grader.

PROCESSOR RESPONSIBILITIES

QC Managers and Employees

The processor shall appoint a Quality Control (QC) Manager who shall ensure that the QC program is maintained in accordance with the Diced Chicken Specification and serve as a liaison with the Grading Branch on matters relating to the QC program. Additionally, plant management must provide the Grader with a letter certifying that all QC personnel performing quality control activities have received adequate training and understand their duties and responsibilities under this commodity program.

A QC employee means any designated company employee who reports to the QC Manager other than the plant owner, manager, foreman, or supervisor, authorized to

examine product and to supervise the production, processing, labeling, and other functions of officially certified poultry or poultry products. The QC Manager's primary function is to assure that the Diced Chicken Specification requirements are met and only product that complies is officially identified.

Product which is identified, or will be identified, with official identification under this program cannot be packed in any plant without an authorized plant QC manager or employee on duty to sample or inspect the product during processing according to approved QC program policies and procedures. Additionally, the Grader must be present during production and provide final official acceptance of the commodity.

Responsibilities

Duties of each employee/position as they relate to the QC Program shall be outlined in the QC program document submitted to the Contracting Officer. Duties may include, but not be limited to, product sampling, weighing, temperature verification, formulation verification, fabrication, packing and packaging, retention and monitoring reworking of retained product.

Facility Requirements

All facilities and equipment used by plant QC personnel for sampling and assessing product must meet requirements as outlined in the Poultry Graders Handbook.

Procedures

All procedures used in the QC program must be equivalent to, or more stringent than, current USDA-AMS standards, policies and procedures as they relate to grading and certification.

Monitoring Criteria

At a minimum, the following areas shall be monitored by the plant in their Commodity Diced Chicken QC program.

- a.** Pre-Diced Boneless Meat
 - Bone defects
- b.** Finished Product
 - Bone defects
 - Other defects
- c.** Customer service management (customer complaints)

Tolerances and Monitoring

All bone defect tolerances and sampling periods shall be equal to, or more stringent than, established standards listed in the Commodity Specification for Diced Chicken and the Poultry Graders Handbook. Once the acceptable criteria are established, the company must document in the QC program how they will be monitored at each identified QC point. This may include work instructions posted at quality control points to facilitate understanding by the responsible person(s), and ensure that the monitoring process is consistent regardless of who is performing the monitoring.

Product Control

The processor shall identify and document what corrective actions are to be taken when tolerances are exceeded. These actions must ensure that non-complying product will be withheld from shipment. Retention procedures are predetermined and must be implemented every time the tolerance is exceeded. Affected product may be diverted to a commercial outlet provided the product is wholesome and commodity markings or any other official commodity identification is removed from the packaging and/or packing material.

Procedures for handling the reworking of retained products shall be documented in the QC program guidelines. The guidelines and procedures must ensure that reworked product is handled properly and will not result in non-complying product being produced or shipped under the Diced Chicken program.

Additionally, when a retention occurs, the processor must identify and document corrective actions taken to prevent future occurrences that are similar in nature. A copy of the corrective action is to be provided to the Grader.

Equipment

The processor must describe and identify the type of equipment, materials or solutions used to monitor QC points. The processor shall establish and maintain documented procedures to control, calibrate, and maintain inspection, measuring, and test equipment used to demonstrate the conformance of product to the specified requirements.

Records

The processor shall identify and document what records will be completed and maintained in order to demonstrate compliance with the program tolerances. Existing QC worksheets may be used if they contain all of the information necessary to perform the quality checks and assure compliance. Worksheets must contain a form number and current edition date. Copies of the forms must be submitted to the Contracting Officer as part of the QC program documentation. Completed QC forms shall be readily available to Grading Branch personnel for review upon request. QC records shall be maintained for one year after the close of the Government fiscal year (October 1 through September 30).

Production records of commodity diced chicken shall be maintained by the processor on a daily basis and provided to the resident Grader no later than the close of business of the next working day.

The processor shall maintain complete records of all customer complaints relative to the commodity. Additionally, the processor's complaint management system shall include procedures that provide immediate notification to the Contracting Officer.